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GOPALAKRISHNA KONE,
MADURA & MADRAS.

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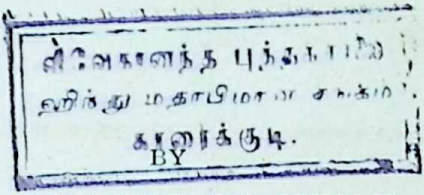

BY

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Third Edition—Revised.

Senior Grade.

E M. GOPALAKRISHNA KONE,

MADURA & MADRAS.

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EXERCISES.

Thyaga Aiyah.

1. Write a brief account of the early life of Thyaga Aiyah from the hinst given below:—

Thyaga Aiyah combined.....and.....with music. His father settled at.....and lived.....on the earnings of..... Thyaga Aiyah stopped at home to.....But the simple duties of the home.....Much of his time he.....In a year he acquired such.....in the art of music that.....His father's death.....only drew.....although he was only a lad of.....When he was sixteen.....He recited the *Rama Mantra* for.....One day Rama stood before him and..... From this day he sang of no one but.....,and people said that he was a.....He sat and delighted vast audiences .....One day Narada visited him in the guise of.....and gave him.....By mastering this book he became.....

2. Describe anp two of Thyaga Aiyah's miracles.

Kucnela.

1. Tell the story of the parched rice.
2. Give in a paragraph the lesson that the story is meant to teach.

Rukmini.

Describe what happened on the morning on which Rukmini was to have been married to Sisupala.

Tirugnana Sambandha

1. Tell the story of the "Milk of Wisdom".[miracles.
2. Describe any two of Triugnana Sambandha's
3. Write a paragrahp on his tours. [India?
4. How did he restore the Saivite religion in south

Hanuman.

1. Write a note on the name "Hunuman".
2. Describe the finding of sita. [Lanka.
3. Write an account of Hanuman's adventures in
4. Tell the story of Vali and Sugriva.

The childhood of Rama.

1. Write a description of Ayodhya.
2. Teli the story of Rama and the Moon.
3. Write a note on Vasishtha.

The Story of Dhruva.

1. Tell the story of Dhruva and Seven Sages.
2. Tell the story of Dhruva's great penance and its reward.

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ANCIENT STORIES.

THYAGA AIYAH.

CHAPTER I.

The Fervent Disciple.

The great musician, Sarangadeva, was born about seven hundred years ago. Many musicians have won name and fame for themselves; but none have combined learning and piety with music, as Sarangadeva did.

Where was this great man born? He was born at Tiruvalur, in the Tanjore District. Here there lived a poor but noble Brahmin, Ramabrahmam by name. He had three sons, and Thyaga Aiyah was the youngest of them. Not having much wealth to boast of, Ramabrahmam found it difficult to maintain his family. In despair he left Tiruvalur for Tiruvadi, on the banks of the Cauveri. Here he settled, and lived from hand to mouth on the earnings of his two elder sons.

The third son, Thyaga Aiyah, looked after his parent's comforts. But the simple duties of the home did not occupy all his time. Much

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of his time he spent in study and meditation. Soon he mastered the Vedas and the Shastras. Then wishing to increase his knowledge of music, for which he had a special taste, he sat at the feet of the master musician of the day, Venkatarama Aiyah. Within less than a year he arrived at such perfection in the art, that it began to be said that he had but few rivals in the field.

When he was fourteen, his father died, and he lost his mother shortly afterwards. But his griefs only drew his mind to higher things. Every day, after his bath, he sat before the image of the family deity, Ramachandra, and meditated upon His form, and nothing gave him greater happiness than to do this.

When he was sixteen years old, a great Brahmin of Kanchi came to Tiruvadi He taught Sarangadeva the *Rama mantra*, and told him to repeat it a hundred and twenty-five thousand times a day. And the young disciple did so for twenty-two long years—till he had reached the age of thirty-eight. What wonderful devotion was this.

But how great was the reward! One day Rama stood before him and blessed him, and Thyaga Aiyah burst forth into song. From this day he sang of no one but Rama.

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CHAPTER II.

The Musician.

His true devotion as well as his music made people flock to Thyaga Aiyah's house in great numbers. They said that he was a Narada in wisdom and a Gandharva in music.

Soon his fame spread far and wide. Men from far-off places, hearing of his fame, came to see and hear him. And he sat and delighted vast audiences with his wonderful music.

One day, as he was taking an oil bath, he heard a knock at the door. He ran and opened the door, and was met by a Sanyasin clad in yellow robes. He received his holy guest with due ceremony, and at his request sang some of his own music to him. Delighted with it, Narada—for it was the great sage who had come to visit him—gave him a book on music, and vanished. Needless to say our hero mastered the book with his usual zeal, and by doing so became the greatest musician of the day.

Not long after, Govindadasa, a renowned Musician of Tirvandram, had a vision of Rama. The great God ordered him to proceed to Tiruvadi and hear His disciple sing. He did as he was told; and when he heard Thyaga Aiyah's

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tunes, he could not but exclaim that the great musician was Valmiki incarnate, born to delight the world with his wonderful music.

Then one day King Sarfoji, King of Tanjore, sent for Thyaga Aiyah, but he was too proud to obey the commands of an earthly king. He cared for none, be he prince or peasant. The whole aim of his life was only to win the favour of his Lord. So he did not appear before the King, knowing that no threat of his would avail with a disciple of Rama.

Thus, Thyaga Aiyah let slip an opportunity of amassing wealth. This so enraged his worldly minded brothers, that one night, as he was sleeping, they stealthily took away the image of Rama, and dropped it into the Cauveri.

The next day, when, as usual, Thyaga Aiyah went to his *puja* room, he did not find the image of his God. Great was his grief. But he prayed hard that the image might be restored to him, and his prayer was soon answered. For, one night, a few days after the incident, Rama appeared to him in a dream, and directed him to dig at a certain spot in the Cauveri. There, to his great delight, Thyaga Aiyah found his dear image lying deep in the sand. So once more he offered his prayers and praises before it.

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CHAPTER III.

His Pilgrimages and His End.

Days rolled on. Once a thought struck Thyaga Aiyah that he should go to Tirupathi and worship the Lord there. Few places are held to be more sacred in India than this shrine. Throughout the year pilgrims can be seen going up the hill to perform their vows to Lord Srinivasa, resident there.

On an auspicious day, Thyaga Aiyah started for Tirupathi, accompanied by his disciples. On entering the temple, he found he could not have a view of the Lord, a screen having been hung up in front of the Deity. But he prayed to Him, and, to the astonishment of all the pilgrims, the screen dropped down of its own accord.

On his way back from Tirupathi, he stopped at Kovur, a place dedicated to God Siva. Here, at the request of one Natesa Mudaliar, he stayed a week. Then he resumed his journey.

His way lay through a forest. When he was in the densest part of it, he was attacked by a band of dacoits. They boldly commanded the palanquin bearers to stop, and demanded money. Nothing daunted, Thyaga Aiyah prayed to his Lord, and Rama came in the guise of a police-man and drove away the thieves.

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But up in his palanquin, Thyaga Aiyah was not aware of all that had happened. The thieves, however, shortly after, came to him, and asked him who the policeman was. He then guessed that it must have been Rama himself, and he offered his thanks to Him. And the thieves, realising the greatness of the man whom they had intended to plunder, became his staunch disciples.

Then Thyaga Aiyah reached a Brahmin street. Here he saw a crowd of people in the temple hard by. On enquiring why so many people were there, he learnt that a pilgrim bound for Tirupathi had fallen into a well in the temple and had been drowned. The dead body had been taken out of the well, and the wife of the dead man was weeping bitterly over it. Going to the temple, Thyaga Aiyah stood before the body, and prayed to Rama to restore life to the dead man. Instantly the dead man rose, as if from sleep, and walked. All the by-standers were filled with joy.

Between the Cauveri and the Coleroon there lies the sacred city of Srirangam, with its great Vishnu temple. After his return from Tirupathi, Thyaga Aiyah went to this shrine to worship. That done, he came back to his village.

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Shortly afterwards, his wife died. This made him very sad; but he found comfort in the thought that God's will is the best.

At last one day Rama appeared to him, and said that in the beginning of the tenth month from that date he would breathe his last. When nine months and twenty days had elapsed, Rama once more appeared to him, and told him to withdraw from the world, promising to call him to Him ten days later.

On the same day as Rama appeared to him, Thyaga Aiyah renounced the world in the midst of holy Brahmins. Ten days later, in the year 4948 according to the Kali age, he quietly passed away from this earth. He was buried on the banks of the Cauveri, and on the spot where his body lay was erected a mound by his disciples. Here, annually, a great religious ceremony is held in his honour, which is attended by musicians and devotees from all parts of India. Harikathas are performed before the shrine, and vast audiences gather around it.

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KUCHELA.

CHAPTER I.

Kuchela Goes to Dwaraka.

There once lived a Brahmin Kuchela by name. He was a friend of Krishna, King of Dwaraka. He was so poor that all his clothes were in holes; and he had a chaste wife and a number of children to support.

Every day, when his morning rites were finished, he went about the streets singing hymns in praise of God. The villagers, admiring his saintliness, gave him handfuls of rice, and with the rice so collected he fed his family.

An ardent devotee of Krishna, he passed his days in constant meditation of Him. He firmly believed that He would never forsake him, for he knew that no devotee of His had ever come to grief. For Krishna was no ordinary mortal. He was the Great God Himself, Who had come down to the earth to help His devotees.

Often it is the men of God who suffer the most in this world. But such sufferings are but trials of their virtues. Their souls are purified by them, and they are drawn nearer to God. Why then should they grieve ?

Though he had been worshipping Krishna all these years, Kuchela was as poor as ever.

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Even his wife Kshuthshama, that loving and virtuous lady, who all these days had been bearing the stings of poverty without a murmur, could be patient no longer. She at last approached her husband, and in a tone of marked humility and reverence addressed him thus: "My Lord, you may be aware that Krishna and yourself are friends. Both of you read under the same Guru. He is now residing in Dwaraka. He is the Lord of Lakshmi, and is much attached to Brahmins. To those who fall at His lotus feet he gives everything, even his own self. Pray go to Him and request His help. Surely we can get some relief at his hands."

The appeal of his wife touched Kuchela's heart, and he forthwith resolved to go. The thought that he would soon be able to see the Lord gave him not a little satisfaction. Turning to his wife, he said "My dear, is there anything you can give me that can be placed at His holy feet?"

Begging a few handfuls of parched rice, she had it tied up in a torn cloth, and handed it over to him.

The *Shastras* say that whenever we go to see our God, a Guru or a King, we should never go empty-handed. Something to show our love,

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be it a fruit or a flower, should be taken with us to be given as a present. So Kuchela, who was versed in the *Shastras*, took the parched rice with him.

Many a weary mile he travelled before at last he came to Dwaraka.

Crossing street after street, he came to the palace of Krishna. There the Lord was sitting on His throne along with His consort, Rukmini, talking to her pleasantly. When He saw His dear old friend coming towards him, He left her at once, and went to welcome him.

Embracing him, He asked how he and his family were. Then He washed his feet, and smeared sandal over his body. Next He brought him food, and asked him to rest. All the while, Rukmini had been fanning him.

All in the palace wondered at the reception given to the poor Brahmin "Oh! what good deeds," said they to themselves, "must he have done in his former birth to merit such service at His hands!"

The truth was that to Krishna the Brahmin was His God. In the Gita the Lord has plainly said so. Besides, Kuchela had been his class-mate. Is it then any wonder that Kuchela was so honoured?

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CHAPTER II.

The Bestowal of Riches.

After Kuchela awoke from his sleep, Krishna had a long conversation with him. He recalled to his mind several incidents connected with their life in the Gurukula.

Once their Guru's wife had wanted them to fetch a bundle of faggots from a forest near by. Scarcely had they gone into the woods, when the sky was overcast with clouds, and heavy rain fell accompanied by wild winds. In the darkness they both lost their way, but when day dawned, they found themselves walking slowly towards home. Great was the joy of their Guru, Sandipini, when, going into the forest in search of them, he saw them returning home. With a full heart he blessed them, saying that they would never forget what they had learnt under him.

Every boy who reads this story should behave towards his Guru even as the Lord and his friend did. He should never cross his teacher, for by so doing he brings disgrace upon the land of his birth, ever famous for the devotion of her children towards their Gurus. If the Guru is pleased, the Gods are pleased.

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The Guru is Brahma, he is Vishnu and he is Siva He is the fountain of knowledge. He dispels our darkness and leads us to light. Is he not, therefore, worthy of our reverence?

But let us turn to Krishna. Their conversation ended, Krishna, smiling, said, "Friend, I am sure you have brought something for me to eat."

Kuchela felt ashamed to give Him the parched rice. So he stood silent, before him.

But Krishna, who knew the hearts of all men, took the bundle of parched rice from him, and put a handful of it into His mouth. That was the turning point of Kuchela's life. Ever afterwards Lakshmi came to dwell in his house, and his poverty vanished like mist before the morning sun.

You will, thus, see that to please God is an easy thing. No elaborate ceremonies are needed. A sincere and loving heart is what He requires. Where that is wanting God's mercy will not descend. A man need not be rich to please Him, for riches do not count in His eyes. Be he rich or poor, provided he is sincere in his love of Him, God gives him His blessing. Therefore, love God with all your heart. Then, as sure as the night follows the day, He will shower His choicest blessings on you.

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Need we say that in Kuchela's case Krishna ate the parched rice because of his real love for him? In His previous life as Rama, He had done a similar thing. He heartily partook of the fruits reserved by Sabari.

Kuchela stayed in the palace that night, and was sumptuously fed by the Lord. The next morning he started for his home, not having, in his opinion, achieved anything much by his visit.

He was not, however, sad because of this; for he had never worshipped God for the purpose of acquiring riches His was a pure love, untainted by any thought of a reward, except if it was the hope of Heaven. So he was very happy at this hour, for had he not seen Krishna, the object of his adoration?

Marvelling at the extreme simplicity of the Lord, he said to himself, "How kind, how loving wert Thou! Didst thou not openly embrace me and even wash my feet O! How blessed am I. Thou art the Lord of the universe, Thy mercy is infinite, Thy bounty boundless. Thou art right in leaving me as poor as ever, lest in the pride of wealth I should forget Thy holy feet."

He came nearer and nearer home. Strange sights greeted him. His old house had been

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transformed into a palace. In royal robes his wife came to welcome him. Kuchela could scarcely believe his eyes. A moment he paused. Then the truth dawned on his mind. God had rewarded him for his devotion He had blessed him because he had loved him.

He meditated upon His divine form, and offered thanks to Him. Then praising Him heartily, he said, "Even as the clouds, seeing a sun-dried world, pour down rain, O Lord, Thou hast showered Thy blessings on me, and my poverty has fled. May my love of Thee never flag, and may I be born again and again only to serve Thee add Those who love Thee."

Kuchela lived long a life of happiness in this world, and at last reached Vaikunta, the abode of Vishnu.

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THE GIRLHOOD OF RUKMINI.

CHAPTER I.

There once reigned in Vidarbha a king, Bhishmaka by name. He was a just and a wise ruler. All his subjects loved him. There was joy and prosperity in the land.

He had five sons and a daughter. They grew up strong and handsome children, and were brought up as befitted their rank. They all loved one another, much to the joy and delight of their parents.

The eldest child was Rukmi. The King loved him very much, and never once crossed his will. He loved his daughter Rukmini too.

Now who was Rukmini? She was the incarnation of Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu. Whenever Vishnu descends upon this earth, she also takes a human form and lives with him. In the Thretha age they both lived as Rama and Sitâ. It was their plan that in the Dwapara age they should live as Krishna and Rukmini.

It is not without a purpose that God comes down to this earth. To punish the wicked, to protect the righteous and to restore justice—for these reasons He comes to live among men.

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But to return to our story. When Rukmini grew up, her brother Rukmi chose Sisupala, the Raja of Chedi, to be her husband; and orders being given for the celebration of the marriage, the people at once began to deck their houses, and the city of Kundinapura put on a festive appearance.

There was one person, however, who did not rejoice, but was overwhelmed with grief, and that was Rukmini. Ever since she had heard that she was to be united in wedlock to Sisupala, she had been weighed down with sorrow. A mean wretch and an avowed enemy of everything good and virtuous, Sisupala was no companion in life for her. Her heart was set upon Shri Krishna of Dwaraka. Often had she heard of Him from people who came to visit her. In manliness and virtue none could excel Him. He was worthy of her and she of Him. In her mind, therefore, she had chosen him as her husband.

Krishna, too, hearing of her beauty, gentleness and generosity, wanted to marry her. But Rukmi, between whom and Krishna no love was lost, had chosen, as we know, Sisupala as his sister's partner in life. And the marriage was to take place the next day. No wonder Rukmini gave way to despair. But then, thinking

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that perhaps Krishna might not know how things stood, she quickly despatched a Brahmin messenger to Dwaraka, His abode.

No sooner had the messenger received her letter, than he hurried to Krishna's city. There he saw the Lord seated in all his splendour on the throne in His palace. Delighted at the sight of the holy Brahmin, He came down from His seat, and received him with due honour. Then touching his feet with His hands, He said, "Holy Brahmin, does everything go well with you? Are the Brahmins of your city living pious, contented and virtuous lives? Is your King ruling his subjects justly and wisely? Please let me know what has brought you here at considerable risk to your person."

The Brahmin, struck with the humility and kindness of Krishna, praised Him and said, "Krishna, I am the messenger of Rukmini, the daughter of Bhishmaka, the King of Vidarba. Be pleased to read this letter, and then do as you deem fit."

Krishna, then, read the letter and folded it with a smile on his lips.

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CHAPTER II.

RUKMINI'S MESSAGE.

What were the contents of the letter that provoked Krishna's smile? This was how Rukmini wrote:

"O Krishna, I bow to your lotus feet. Hearing of your good qualities and beauty of form, I have in my heart chosen you as my Lord. I have come of age when I should be married. In age, beauty, and descent you are my equal. Take me as your wife, O Lord. Let me not be wedded to that wicked Sisupala.

"To-morrow is my wedding day. In mercy to me, come here, kill Sisupala and his allies, and marry me according to Gandharva rites.

"Perhaps you may think it impossible to take me away from the harem without meeting and killing the guards. But I shall be worshipping at the temple of Gauri, as has been the custom in my family. Then will be the time for you to take me away. I am weak and forlorn, having scarcely tasted any food for some time. I fear I may kill myself unless you come and save me. Delay is dangerous in my case."

Needless to say the letter was read with keen interest by Krishna. He was touched by Rukmini's simplicity and sincere devotion to Him. Looking at the Brahmin, whom he under-

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stood from his looks to be waiting for a reply, he said, "Holy man, kindly tell Rukmini that I have been spending sleepless nights on her account. I love her dearly, and I know that Rukmi stands in the way of our happiness. I will kill him and his allies, and wed her.'

Then Krishna mounted His golden car, and bidding the Brahmin sit by His side, He proceeded to Kundinapura, where He was received by Bhishmaka with all due ceremony. Thither Balarama had already come with a large retinue, fearing trouble between Krishna and Sisupala.

Early the next day both parties had performed all the ceremonies to be performed before the actual ceremony of marriage, and there was every likelihood of Rukmini being wedded to Sisupala. What could she do? Her mind became restless, though every moment she awaited the arrival of the Lord. But just as she was beginning to give way to despair, the Brahmin whom she had sent to Krishna arrived, bringing her His letter. Nor was this all. Without much ceremony he told her of Krishna's arrival and of His promise to marry her. The news—like nectar to a dying man—wrought a wonderful change. Rukmini prostrated herself before the Brahmin, for she had nothing to give him as a present.

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CHAPTER III.

Rukmini's Marriage.

The procession to the temple of Gauri now started. With graceful steps Rukmini moved, and at last stepped into the temple. Standing in the midst of the elderly women who had accompanied her there, she prayed to Gauri for the fulfilment of her desire.

Then, retracing her steps, she entered the marriage hall. All the Princes who had assembled there wondered at her beauty, but only for a short while, for the Lord entered the hall with his brother, Balarama, and the next moment Rukmini was on her way to Dwaraka in the car of gold.

Sisupala and his allies flew into a rage, and quickly putting on their armour, pursued Krishna. But they were no match for the valiant Lord, and were slain in large numbers in the fight that ensued. Sisupala, finding that he could not recover Rukmini, returned to his city, filled with rage and grief.

To return to Rukmi. He vowed vengeance, and collecting a large army, marched against Krishna. He too, however, was defeated, and was on the point of being slain, when Rukmini interceded on her brother's behalf, saying, "O,

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Lord, do not, for my sake, kill my brother." And Krishna, anxious to please his wife, let him go free.

Dwaraka was duly reached. There the marriage was celebrated in strict accordance with ceremonial rites. All the people of the city rejoiced exceedingly, and Dwaraka shone like another Vaikunta.

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TIRUGNANA SAMBANDHA.

CHAPTER I.

The Childhood of Sambandha.

In the north of the Tanjore District, celebrated alike for the fertility of its soil and the brain of its children, lies the ancient town of Shiyali. A centre of Brahmin culture, here is a shrine dedicated to God Siva, right in the heart of the town. As to the age of the temple, who can venture an opinion? The Puranas say that Brahma first worshipped the Lord here for success in his work of creation. Here Indra, Parasara and a host of Devas and men have offered pujas for the attainment of their ends.

In this holy place, more than one thousand and two hundred years ago, was born the famous saint Sambandha, who was destined to restore Saivism to its pristine glory and grandeur. Jainism and Buddhism were then the chief religions of South India. Saivism was at a low ebb, and Vedic rites were at a standstill. To restore the Vedic religion and destroy the Buddhistic and Jainic cults was Sambandha born.

But to begin the story. There lived at Shiyali a holy Brahmin who, though for years childless, continued to pray daily to God for the

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boon of a son. After many long years his prayers were answered, his wife, Bhagavathi, giving birth to a child radiant as the morning sun. Was he not come to dispel the darkness of ignorance that then shrouded this land?

Indeed he was. For when only three years old, he cried bitterly as his father, Sivapadahridaya was about to leave the house for his morning bath in the temple tank, and his father, loth to leave him, took him with him to the temple.

On reaching the tank, Sivapadahridaya left the child on the bank, and plunged into the water. Missing its father, the child wept bitterly. Then the Lord Siva took pity on it, and asked Parvati to feed it. So she fed it, but with the "Milk of Wisdom." Then the child stopped crying at once.

After his bath the father came to the child, and seeing milk on its lips, asked it who had fed it. The child pointed to the Lord on the hill opposite the tank, and sang a song in praise of the Deity. The people of the town, hearing of this extraordinary incident, flocked to the temple tank, and blessed the child. Then after worshipping the Lord, both father and son returned home.

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The next morning, Sambandha went with his father to Tirukolakka, a place about a mile from Shiyali, where there is a Siva shrine. He praised the Deity here in songs with pretty tunes. Delighted with his songs, Siva gave him a pair of golden cymbals. With this token of God's approval of his songs he returned home, happy at heart.

CHAPTER II.

His Tours and Miracles.

The fame of Sambandha soon began to spread far and wide. The devotees of Siva from all round came to pay him their respects. One of them was a renowned musician from a village near Chidambaram. His name was Tiru Nilakanta. He played on the vina the tunes of the wonderful songs of Sambandha, and went with him wherever he went.

Chidambaram is the great stronghold of Saivism, and is sometimes called the Southern Kailas. Pilgrims from all parts of India come here all through the year. That heart is a heart of stone that does not rejoice in the Dance of the Lord. So it was not long before Sambandha wanted to worship the Lord at Chidambaram and came there to worship Him. But he did not stay long here, though not a day passed

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that he did not sing wonderful hymns of praise in honour of the Deity.

Leaving Chidambaram, he came to Vridhachalam, another famous place with a Siva shrine, and walked thence to Thiruvarathurai, worshipping the Lord at all the temples on the way. Grieving at seeing the child walking all the way, the Lord Siva ordered the Brahmins of Tiruvarathurai to present him with a palanquin and an umbrella, both made of pearls. The Brahmins did as they were commanded, and in all his future tours Sambandha set out in this palanquin, with the umbrella. Returning thanks to Siva, for he knew that it was He who had bestowed these gifts, he returned to Shiyali, accompanied by his father.

Though his stay at Shiyali was short, not a day passed but he went and prayed before the Lord of the Boats—for such is His name—He who had given him wisdom. Meanwhile his admirers grew in numbers, and his songs were listened to with rapt attention.

Another saint, Tirunavukkarasu Nainar, hearing of the growing fame of the young Sambandha, wanted to meet him. Proceeding towards Shiyali, he was met by Sambandha on the way, and the two saints became life-long friends.

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Tirunavukkarasu lived with Sambandha for a time at Shiyali, where he worshipped the Lord Siva on the hill. Then he left on a visit to other Siva shrines.

Sambandha too now set out on long tours to important Siva centres. Once he was travelling in Malanad. Here, to the north of the Cauveri, is a place called Tiruppachilasram. The king of the place had a daughter who was suffering from a terrible disease. On the day of Sambandha's arrival in the town she lay unconscious on the floor of the temple courtyard. The King had tried many a drug and found it useless, when, invited by him, Sambandha entered the temple. But not with the aid of drugs did he restore the Princess to life and health. He only sang a verse in praise of Siva, and the Princess stood before all assembled in the temple in radiant health! The King returned his grateful thanks to Sambandha, and withdrew with his retinue. The saint remained at the shrine for some days, and then set out on a pilgrimage to the shrines in the Konkan.

It was now the rainy season, and his followers, unable to withstand the rigours of the climate, went down with fever, and besought his aid. He sang a hymn in praise of Siva, and the fever left them.

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From the Konkan Sambandha travelled to the Chola territory. It was the hot weather, and the heat was very trying. Taking pity on his follower, Siva put up a screen of pearls over his palanquin to cut off some of the heat. Sambandha had it fixed to the palanquin, and thanked God for his mercy.

In the course of his tour Sambandha came to a place called Tirumarugal. Here, in the temple, lay a man bitten by a snake, with his wife weeping over him. He touched him, and the man stood up none the worse for the bite. Blessing the saint who had restored him to life, he went home with his wife.

Sambandha now visited many more shrines, at last reaching Tiruvizhimizhalai. Here, owing to drought and the absence of floods in the Cauveri, famine stared the people in the face. But Sambandha prayed to his Lord for the deliverance of the people from this calamity, and the Lord gave him every day a gold coin with which to feed the people. Shorty after this it began to rain, and the sufferings of the people became a thing of the past.

With the blessings of the people, Sambandha left for Vedaranyam, a place held most sacred in all India. On reaching the temple he found

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the door of the innermost shrine shut; but on his praying to the Lord there, the gates flew open, much to the astonishment of the bystanders.

CHAPTER III.

The Jains and the Buddhists Vanquished.

While Sambandha was at Vedaranyam, a call came for the Pandyan Kingdom for him to go there and plant again the uprooted tree of Saivism. The Pandyan King had become a convert to Jainism, and Saivism was dying out. The Pandyan Queen, however, still remained a Saivite, and it was she who now sent secretly for Sambandha the Great. He came, and was hospitably received by the Queen and lodged in a mutt. But coming to know of his arrival, the jealous Jains set fire to his residence, and there was a big blaze. Sambandha and his followers, however, prayed to Siva, and the heat of the flames miraculously transformed themselves into a high fever in the body of the Pandyan King.

Drugs were administered, and the Jain magicians tried their art, but the fever did not abate. So in despair the Queen fell at the feet of Sambandha. He was then taken to the King, and with a handful of sacred ash and a recital of the five sacred letters he cured the King.

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This was the turning point in the King's life and the fortunes of Jainism, for the King broke away from the heretical cult, and gladly embraced Saivism.

Enraged at the success of Sambandha, the Jains made two more attempts to vanquish him, but met with no success; and in the end they were all killed, being impaled on stakes.

His work over in the Pandya Kingdom, Sambandha set out for Rameswaram. From here he went north, and halted at a place full of Buddhists. He defeated them by his argumentative skill, and many of them openly became his disciples. After visiting many more shrines, he reached Shiyali, once again to worship the Lord of the Boats, on the Hill.

CHAPTER IV.

Marriage and End.

Sambandha did not stay long in Shiyali. He longed to visit the shrines in the Tondaimandalam territory. So he went as far north as Tiruvathiyur, visiting Kanchi and Kalahasthi on the way. At last he came to Mylapore, where he converted the dead bones of a woman into a live body. After visiting a few shrines which lay on his way home, he came back to native soil, never again to go forth on religious tours.

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Now came proposals for celebrating his marriage. Though first averse to marriage, he bowed to the will of his father, for it was he who wanted to see him married.

In Nallur near Shiyali there lived a devout worshipper of Siva, Nambi by name. He had a daughter. She was chosen as Sambandha's bride, and the marriage was duly performed at Nallur. But on the day of the marriage, clad in his wedding garments, Sambandha entered the Siva shrine in the village with his bride. The guests followed them, when suddenly there was a big blaze of fire. Many a guest fell back in fear, but Sambandha and his young bride entered the flames, and were united to their God.

Such in brief is the story of Sambandha. His is a name held in reverence by all in South India. His songs—Thevarams as they are called—are at once musical as well as devotional. They have captured the hearts of rich and poor alike, and to-day there is not a single home in South India where they are not sung. In his honour an annual festival is held in Shiyali. It is called the Tirumulaipal festival, and lasts for ten days. People flock from far and near to worship the Saint during these days. May he impart to us some of his wisdom!

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THE STORY OF HANUMAN.

CHAPTER I.

The Boyhood of Hanuman.

On the slopes of mount Meru there once lived a monkey chief Kesari by name. His wife, Anjana, was out alone one day as strong wind blew. Shortly afterwards she had a son, who was called Anjaneya, which means "the son of Anjana." His father was Vayu, God of the wind.

Taking the child in her arms, Anjana returned home. Then she put him in a cradle, and went out into the woods to gather fruits for herself and her lord. The child, missing his mother and feeling hungry, began to cry, and looking up, espied the red sun rising in the east. Thinking it to be a ripe fruit, he said to himself, "I will go and get it."

Then holding his breath, he leapt up into the air, though he was only a few hours old. Vayu, his father, favoured him with a cool breeze, and the sun too shed gentle rays on him. But the Gods were all surprised at the boldness of the child.

Nearer and nearer he came to the sun, till he was close to the solar region. It was the time of an eclipse. Rahu, intent on eating a

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piece out of the Sun, made his appearance; but terrified at the presence of the monster monkey-child, he fled in terror to Indra, and told him about what he had seen. Mounting his elephant, Irawatha, Indra came to where Anjaneya was. A fight ensued, and Indra dealt Anjaneya a heavy blow on the left jaw. Down he rolled through the air, and at last fell on the top of a mountain. Filled with rage and grief, Vayu took him up and nursed him.

You may, perhaps, wonder at the daring of the monkey-child; but you must remember that, born of a celestial father, he was possessed of divine powers, and was destined to do, later on, still mightier deeds. The child is father of the man.

But to resume our story. Vayu, the wind God, highly incensed at the action of Indra, made breathing impossible for gods and men. The unhappy gods, who were at the point of suffocation, prayed to Brahma to save them from their peril. Knowing full well the cause of their present distress, the Creator of the world came to Vayu to appease him. Then with a touch of his divine hand, he made Anjaneya quite well again, and named him Hanuman, from the scar on his jaw. Vayu was pleased when he saw that all was well with his child,

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and willed that all should breathe freely again. The gods were relieved in mind, and at the instance of Brahma began to shower gifts on the abnormal child. Brahma promised him immunity from Brahmastra. Surya undertook his education in all the Shastras. Varuna and Agni freed him from the possibilities of drowning and death by fire. Yama and Indra promised that Yama-danda and Vajra should not harm him.

The gifts bestowed, the gods returned to their abodes. But Hanuman, elated by these boons, began to disturb the Rishis in their penance. In their rage they cursed him that he should not know his own prowess, except when it was pointed out to him by others. The curse had immediate effect; and no longer conscious of his own strength, Hanuman ceased to disturb the peace and quiet of the hermitages. He now led a peaceful life in his father's house, amassing a wealth of knowledge.

CHAPTER II.

Friends in Distress.

At Kishkindha, near modern Humpi, there once reigned a monkey-king, Riksharajas by name. He had two sons. The elder son was

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called Vali, and the youuger Sugriva. On the death of the old King, Vali ascended the throne. On one occasion, however, he had to fight a demon, who led him far away from Kishkinda. He could not, therefore, return to his capital for a long time. Meanwhile, Sugriva, taking him for dead, had himself crowned as King. Later on Vali returned, and in a fit of anger drove his brother out of the city. Sugriva took refuge in the Risyamuka mountain, where Vali could not reach him, and there he dwelt with a handful of his monkey followers. He made Hanuman his chief counsellor, because by his learning, tact, and practical knowledge of the world, he was best fitted to be his adviser; and Hanuman ever remained loyal to him. A friend in need is a friend indeed.

In his mountain fastness Sugriva was ever planning how best to regain his kingdom and to have his revenge on Vali. The time when he could do so was not long in coming. One day, as he was looking round from the heights of the Risyamuka, he espied, not far off, two handsome figures approaching the mountain. At first he thought they were the spies of Vali, and suspicion clouded his mind. Hanuman, however, tried to cheer him up, and said that he would go and ascertain who the strangers were. Assuming the

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guise of a Brahmin and speaking Sanskrit, as was the way of the Brahmins of old, he appeared before them.

Saluting the two figures, who to him seemed to be celestial beings of extraordinary beauty, he asked them who they were and why they were there.

"We are the sons of Dasaratha," said Lakshmana. "This is Rama, and I am Lakshmana, his younger brother. At our father's behest, we entered the forest of Dandaka. We are in search of Sita, my brother's wife, whom we have lost in the woods. May we know who you are and why you have come to meet us ?"

"I am the minister of Sugriva," replied Hanuman. "Maruthi is my name. My lord, exiled by his brother Vali, lives on that mountain there. If you, great warriors, could but restore his kingdom to him, no doubt he would do his best to get back Sita for you."

"We promise to kill Vali," said Lakshmana, speaking on his brother's behalf.

Pleased with the promise of help, Hanuman led the brothers to the Risyamuka, where Sugriva, brooding over his fate, sat all alone.

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When he had introduced the brothers, Hanuman said, "Your sorrows are alike. Therefore, agree to aid each other."

Before Agni, the Fire God, the two brothers and the monkey chieftain promised to help each other, Rama promising to kill Vali and Sugriva to restore Sita to Rama.

Not long after Vali was killed in battle and Sugriva installed as King in his place

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CHAPTER III.

The Quest for Sita.

When winter was over, Sugriva summoned his monkey hordes, and sent them in all directions in quest of Sita. Those who proceeded towards the north, the east, and the west returned after an unsuccessful search. But not so those who went south; for among those who marched south were skilful generals, Hanuman being one of them.

Sugriva, who knew of the ability, integrity and skill of Hanuman, assured Rama that in all probability he would discover Sita. Prior to his departure, Rama therefore gave him his ring, and requested him, with tears in his eyes, to hand it over to Sita, if ever he should

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find her. Bowing low to Rama and Sugriva, Hanuman started off south at the head of a mighty army.

Soon the shore of the southern ocean came in sight. Between it and Lanka, where Sita was said to be living, lay a broad expance of ocean. How to cross the deep sea was the problem. Angada and a host of other generals stood dismayed. At length Hanuman consented to try to get across, his own strength having been pointed out to him.

Increasing the size of his body to fit himself for the purpose and holding his breath (for he was skilled in that art) he ascended into the air, and flew towards Lanka. On the way, he met with two obstacles, which, however, he overcame. Towards evening he reached Lanka, and alighted on the top of mount Trikuta. Resuming his old form, he resolved to enter the City.

At the main gate stood a Rakshasi, Lankini by name. She would not allow him to go inside. So he knocked her on the head, and got in. But nowhere could he find Sita in spite of a most careful search. There was, however, one spot left unexplored, and that was an Asoka grove. Thither Hanuman went with a weary mind. To his great surprise, he saw a lovely damsel, clad

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in dusty robes, uttering the name of Rama incessantly with her lips. Was there any doubt that she was Rama's wife? Hanuman was full of joy. Climbing up a neighbouring tree, he lay hidden among its branches, from where he looked closely at the damsel to make sure that it was Sita.

The day was now about to dawn, and Ravana came and stood before her. Murmuring words of love, he begged her to marry him. But she scorned his love, true *Sati* that she was, and Ravana returned to his palace.

No longer was Hanuman in doubt. It was Sita, and he admired her loyalty and devotion to her Lord. What else could he expect of Rama's wife and Janaka's daughter? In prosperity and in adversity a chaste wife remains true to her lord.

No sooner had Ravana left the grove than Hanuman descended from the tree, and singing the tale of Rama, appeared before Sita. Sita would not at first believe him to be Rama's messenger, for she naturally thought he might be an emissary of the Rakshasas. But when the monkey continued in his praise of Rama, all her doubts were dispelled, and she spoke to him. Then Hanuman gave her Rama's ring, which

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she kissed and put on her finger. She then narrated all her present sufferings, and said that she would die within two months unless Rama came and rescued her. She then gave him the jewel she wore on her head, and requested him to give it to her Lord. He promised to do so, and took leave of her.

Now that he had seen Janaki, Hanuman's heart was filled with joy. He could gladly go and tell Rama the happy news. But he could not rest until he had done Ravana some injury which would seriously tell upon his prestige. He therefore destroyed many beautiful buildings, and defeated many Rakshasas who were sent to kill him. At last rendered helpless by the arrow of Brahma, he was taken to the presence of Ravana by Indrajit, the demon king's son. Sitting in his presence, he rated him roundly for his vicious act, and said that if he considered himself and his clan, he would forthwith restore Sita to Rama.

These words of advice spoken by Hanuman so offended Ravana, that in a fit of rage he ordered Hanuman to be killed. But his sage brother, Vibishana, did not countenance such an extreme measure, and entreated him to disfigure the tail of the monkey, which, he said, would be a sufficient punishment.

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Accordingly Hanuman's tail was tied with pieces of cloth soaked in oil, and lighted. But with his tail alight Hanuman leaped from house to house, and set them all ablaze. Many a building was reduced to ashes, and there was moaning everywhere in Lanka.

Presently a thought struck Hanuman that made him stand aghast. Might it not be that Sita had perished in the flames? He hurried back to the Asoka grove, where to his great delight he saw Sita unhurt by the fire. Taking his final leave of her, he ascended into the air, and crossing the ocean, re-joined the monkey host on the other side.

Now all was joy in the monkey camp. Jambavan, chieftain of the bears, Angada, and others praised his courage and skill. Then they all made a move to the place where Rama, eagerly expecting news of his wife, was awaiting them. What was his joy when Hanuman told him that Sita was safe!

CHAPTER IV.

Hanuman's Last Days.

With the discovery of Sita, all was not over. The ocean had to be crossed, and so a bridge

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was soon laid by Nala. This bridge stands to this day, submerged in the water, and is known as the Sethu.

Over this bridge a monkey army marched, and landed in Lanka Then a great fight began, and lasted eighteen days. Hanuman killed many a Rakshasa. Once Rama and Lakshmana, bound by what was known as the serpent noose, fell senseless. Their lives were despaired of, but Hanuman brought them, though with great difficulty, some herbs, and they recovered. The war ended with the triumph of Rama's arms, and the extinction of the Rakshasa race.

Now Sita was brought from the Asoka grove to Rama's presence. Ascending the magic car, Rama and his suite started off for Ayodhya.

There, to the great joy of his people, Rama was crowned king. There was great rejoicing throughout the city. At the Durbar unique honour was shown to Hanuman. Sita made him a present of her necklace in token of her approbation. Then, the Durbar over, Hanuman returned to Kishkindha.

Even to-day it is believed that wherever the Ramayana is read, Anjaneya is there, so great is his devotion to Rama, for sages say that he still lives.

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THE CHILDHOOD OF RAMA.

CHAPTER I.

AYODHYA.

The great city of Ayodhya stood on the banks of the river Sarayu. On all sides rose lofty walls, and all round the walls was a moat filled with water, deep and impassable. The city gates were strongly barred, and guarded by archers. On the walls were towers which were filled with archers and stored with weapons of every description. The city was full of people, and everyone was healthy and happy. All the houses were large and beautifully arranged, and the streets were well watered There were very many beautiful temples, and stately palaces rose in many places with domes like the tops of mountains, with pleasant gardens full of birds and flowers and shady groves of trees loaded with delicious fruits. There were magnificent tanks in the city covered with the white lotus. Ducks and geese swam upon them or dived under the clear waters. The whole city was adorned with gems and perfumed with flowers and incense, and it was ever filled with the sweet sound of music, the sharp twanging of bows, and the holy chanting of Vedic hymns.

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In the midst of the great city was the magnificent palace of the mighty King Dasaratha, encompassed by high walls. There were two gates in the walls, and over the gateways the music of the *mohobat* was played at every quarter of the day and the night. Within the palace and round about it there were many temples to the gods and hundreds of treasuries filled with treasure. In the midst of the palace was the throne of the great King, set upon pillars covered with precious stones. The palace was guarded by thousands of warriors who were as fierce as flames of fire and as watchful as the lions that guard their dens in the mountains

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CHAPTER II.

King Dasaratha.

King Dasaratha was very wise in the Vedas and the Vedangas, and had great foresight and ability. He was beloved by all his people. In riches and magnificence he was equal to Indra, and he protected his subjects like another Manu. In supplying their wants and necessities he proved himself to be their true father. His ministers were wise, capable of understanding a nod, and devoted to their King and country.

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The King had eight special Counsellors, the chief of whom was Sumantra. His two chosen priests and preceptors were Vasishtha and Vamadeva. Possessed of such ministers and priests Dasaratha ruled his kingdom virtuously, and so all the people were happy.

Like a blue lotus floating upon the pure water of the Ganges, little Prince Rama slept on a white cot in the palace. When the King accompanied by his priest Vasishtha, went to see his infant son, the priest pointed to the little prince, and said: O King, I perceive from the marks on Rama that he is no ordinary child, and I am nearly assured that he is an incarnation of Vishnu. Behold his beautiful colour, like green grass, his fine hair, glossy and curled, his large head and high forehead, his brow radiant with the signs of royalty, his face smiling like the full moon, his dark eyes, his lips red as the *bimba* fruit, his nose like that of the green parrot, his neck like that of a shell, his long hands and red palms bearing the marks of the *chakra*, lotus, and discus, his wide breast, his legs resembling plantain trees, his feet red as the rising sun, bearing the marks of the shell, the *chakra*, the mace, and the lotus. Behold all these, and you will see that he is full of marks belonging to Vishnu."

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When Rama was able to run about, he was the delight of his mother and his father, King Dasaratha. Sometimes when the King called Rama, he would turn his back, laugh and run away; and if anyone went after him, he would run all the harder, but come back afterwards of his own accord. Sometimes Rama would snatch a morsel of his father's food, and run away and eat it, laughing all the while. If his mother asked Rama to point out his eyes, nose, mouth, ears, or any other part of his body, he would touch those parts with his forefinger. Sometimes when other ladies came to the palace, they would ask Rama who his mother was. Then he would smile, and run and sit on Queen Kausalya's lap.

CHAPTER III.

Prince Rama and the Moon.

One evening when the Queen was nursing Rama in the inner court of the palace, the full moon rose in all its splendour. When Rama saw it, he stretched out his little hands, and wanted to play with it. His mother could not understand what it was that he wanted, though she asked him many times what it was He still pointed to the moon, and now began to cry. At last she understood what it was that he wanted.

So she said to him, "Do not desire, O my child, to possess the moon, because it is thousands of miles off, and it is not a plaything for children, and no child ever got it. If you wish, I will bring you some jewels that are brighter than the moon, and you can play with them" So saying, she brought some beautiful jewels, and placed them before the little Prince; but Rama threw them away in anger, and began to cry until his eyes were red and swollen with weeping.

Now, by this time, a number of women were gathered around Rama, but no one could console him. So the Queen sent for the king, saying that the little Prince was ill. When the King heard that he was ill, he went to him immediately, and tried to console him. But he could do no more than those who had tried before him, and Rama continued to cry and would not be comforted. Then the King sent for his chief Counsellor, Sumantra, and told him all that had happened. When Sumantra heard that Rama was crying for the moon, he asked those about him to bring little Prince Rama a mirror. So a mirror was brought and placed in his hands. Whan Rama saw the image of the moon in the mirror, he was fully satisfied, and left off weeping, and was soon as merry as before.

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CHAPTER IV.

Rama's Happy Childhood.

Rama was a happy child. When he was about two, he and his brothers would dance in a circle. and clap their hands Sometimes the King would tell Rama to bring him his sandals, and Rama would take up his father's sandals with both his hands, and carry them to him to the great delight of all who saw him. At other times the King would take Rama into the Council-hall, and keep the little boy on his knee during the Council; and Rama listened to all that was going on, and as he sat upon his father's knee, he appeared as beautiful as a new rain-cloud when seated on the golden mountain of Sumaru. Meantime his mother the Queen would be impatient at his absence, and would send her maid servant every minute to the Council to bring away Rama; for a moment's absence from her son appeared like an age in her eyes.

When the sons of Dasaratha were in their third year, the King performed the ceremony of piercing their ears, and the rite was celebrated with great magnificence. After this the brothers began to play with other little boys of their age. They made images of clay, and offered clay offerings to the images, after the

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manner that they had seen the priest af their father offer up sacrifices to the gods on behalf of the household. Sometimes Rama would see his own reflection in a crystal pillar, and he would say to his mother Kausalya, "A second Rama is come, so keep him here that I may play with him." But seeing in like manner the reflection of his own mother, he would say, "Why have you left me and gone to the other Rama? Do not take him in your lap!" And with these words he would take hold of her cloth and pull her away.

CHAPTER V.

Rama at School.

When Rama and his brothers were five years of age, they commenced their education according to the rule. Vasishtha was appointed to be their preceptor, and he initiated them in their studies in the accustomed form. He first worshipped Sarasvati, the goddess of all learning, and afterwards directed the four brothers to make offerings of flowers and leaves of bale fruit to the goddess. He then took a chalk stone, and drew the vowels upon the floor, and directed the boys to run over each letter three times; and when this lesson was over, the King gave many rich presents to

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Vasishtha, and from that time they went every day to the house of Vasishtha to receive his instructions. And the four lads were dressed by their mothers in clothes of different colours; and Rama was dressed in yellow, Lakshmana in purple, and Bharata and Satrughna in green and red. And they had hundreds of servants at their command, but still each one carried his ink bottle in his right hand, and over his left shoulder was his satchel containing books, reeds, and white palm leaves. In this manner they went out of the palace every morning, and proceeded with other schoolboys to the house of their preceptor; and sometimes when a boy stayed away from school without the leave of his preceptor, they were commanded by Vasishtha to go out into the street and bring the truant in. And when they knew all the vowels, they were taught all the other letters of the alphabet; and when they knew these also, they began to teach the smaller boys under the direction of Vasishtha. And Rama never disobeyed his preceptor, nor did anything that would excite his displeasure. And when he had learnt all his letters, he began to read grammar; and in a short time he learnt eighteen languages, as well as the arts of singing, playing on musical instruments, dancing, and painting, and every one of the sciences. And at

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certain times the King would send for his sons and examine them in the Council-hall before his Council; and the boys always acquitted themselves to the admiration of all present, and the Ministers and Chieftains expressed their great surprise at the proficiency of the sons of the King.

So Rama grew up a perfect son, beloved and admired by all.

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THE STORY OF DHRUVA.

CHAPTER I.

KING UTTANAPADA.

King Uttanapada had two wives. Suruchi was the name of one of them, Suniti the name of the other. The King loved Suruchi more than he loved Suniti. Suruchi had a son who was called Uttama, Suniti had a son named Dhruva.

One day as King Uttanapada was seated on his throne, he took Uttama on his lap. Dhruva then came into the room, and seeing his brother on his father's lap, ran up to the throne, and said, "Father, let me too sit on your lap." Suruchi, the mother of Uttama, was in the room, and so the King refused to lift Dhruva on to his lap, for he knew that it would offend Suruchi if he did so. And he was right, for Suruchi grew angry at the mere request of Dhruva to be put on his father's lap.

"Here, on the ground, is your place," she said to Dhruva, dragging him away by the arm. "The King's knee is a seat fit for my son Uttama only, and not for you, Suniti's son. The throne of the King of Kings is not for such as you. Always remember whose son you are, and do not be foolishly ambitious !"

Boy though he was, Dhruva flew into a passion, and brushing past Suruchi, went to the apartment of his mother, Suniti.

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CHAPTER II.

Queen Suniti.

"My son," said Suniti, as her son burst into the room, "what has made you so angry? I have never seen you lose your temper before. Come here; come and sit on my lap, and tell me what has upset you so."

Dhruva strode to his mother, and sat on her lap, but for some little time he could not speak. Then at last he told his mother of Suruchi's arrogance. His tale greatly grieved her, but only on her son's account.

With tears in her eyes Suniti said, "Alas, my son, it is as Suruchi has said. To Uttama belongs the throne of the King of Kings, and you may not sit on it, for to do so is to insult Uttama. To him belong the royal umbrella, the prancing horses, and the mighty elephants, for by his good deeds he has deserved them. These blessings are Suruchi's because of the good deeds done in her former life. I have not deserved so great a reward, because in my former life I did no great deeds of kindness. Let us learn to be patient; let us learn to be content. The wise are patient and happy whatever happens. It is not of rewards that they think; it is only of growing better each day. Strive to

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do good deeds, and be happy in your striving. Love all men; honour the gods. For as water flows from the hill-side to the valleys below, so happiness descends from the happy worlds above upon the meek and humble."

But Dhruva would not be comforted. 'My heart is broken, mother, by this cruel insult,' he said. "No words can comfort me. But I will strive to be good—I will strive to reach' a rank that all the world will wonder at. Meanwhile let my brother succeed to my father's throne."

So saying Dhruva left his mother's room, and walked out into the busy street.

CHAPTER III.

The Seven Sages.

From street to street Dhruva walked, until he came to the main road leading out of the city. The guards at the great gate did not notice him as he passed through with the crowds hurrying to the country-side.

On and on Dhruva walked, until he came to a wood on the side of a hill. Boldly he took a dark footpath that led into the recesses of the wood. Great branches spread over his head, and cast a gloom around.

At last the path seemed to grow light, and there in the distance he saw an open space with signs of habitation around. As he drew near, he saw seven sages sitting on skins of the black antelope spread over the holy *kusa* grass.

Hastening to where they sat, he bowed to each sage in turn, and said, "Holy sirs, I am the son of King Uttanapada and Queen Suniti. A great grief has overtaken me, and I seek your help, so as to rise above the cares of this world."

The sages were not a little surprised at his strange request So one of them said, "But you are only a child of about four or five! What great grief could have overtaken you? Besides you say you are the son of a king. You must have everything to make you happy. We cannot think what could have made you leave your happy home and your dear mother too. You are not ill; you are a strong boy. What could have made you so unhappy? Do you know yourself?"

"Holy sirs," began Dhruva again, "not this coat of brocade—not all the finery of the world—can compensate for insult, and I have been cruelly insulted. It was but yesterday that my father said I was not worthy to sit on his lap, though he let my half-brother Uttama do so. Is it not for honour we live and strive? Is not

life without honour mere existence? And which of you, holy sirs, would have me, boy though I am, live under the shadow of a great insult?"

The sages looked at one another, and said, "How fierce is the spirit of the Kshattriya! This child cannot brook the insult put upon him even by his own father.'

"And by my step-mother too," said Dhruva, bowing low. "For she pulled me aside by the arm, and said some most hurtful words. She said in the presence of my half-brother that my father's knee was a seat fit for him only and that the throne of the King of Kings was not for such as me. She bade me remember whose son I was, and told me not to be foolishly ambitious. And I have not left my mother because I do not love her, but because I love and honour her, and long to wipe off the insult put upon both her and me. Do, holy sirs, tell me how to do this."

Then one of the sages said, "Vishnu is the Lord of Sacrifice. You should seek him in prayer and worship. Those who adore him can reach the highest position in all the three worlds. But when you worship him, you must forget the things about you. You must think only of the Lord.

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Then one of the sages beckoned to Dhruva, and when he approached him, he taught him a prayer, which he bade him recite silently, fixing his mind on Vasudeva.

Dhruva thanked the sages for their kindly interest in him, and left the wood where they dwelt.

CHAPTER IV.

The Great Penance.

On the banks of the great river Jumna stood the city of Mathura, where was a holy shrine of Vishnu. Here Dhruva came to meditate upon the Lord of Sacrifice. Steeped in meditation of his Lord, all the world seemed to pass by him like a thin mist before the golden rays of the morning sun. First he stood on one foot, then on another, and the young ascetic seemed to fade away into a mere shadow with the severity of his penance. But as his body faded, his spirit grew in strength, for the Lord Hari had entered into him.

Soon the Gods grew alarmed, for they feared that Dhruva might grow too strong even for them. So one of them took the form of his mother Suniti, and stood before him weeping, and besought him to desist from his terrible penance.

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"My son, my only son," said the God in the guise of his mother, "why have you left me all alone? Whom have I to comfort me but you, my son? In whom may I hope but in you, my son, my only son? Why have you deserted me? Desist from this cruel penance, which is sullying all your lovely form, and come back to me, your mother. What has a child to do with penance? There are four seasons in the life of man: first comes childhood, the time of play; then youth, the time of study; then manhood, the time of work; last of all old age, the time of prayer and meditation. Now is your time of play. What right have you to kill yourself with prayer and fasting? Is it not your duty to love me, your mother? This penance is sheer wickedness. Come away home, or I will put an end to my life here before your eyes."

But not a word of all this speech did Dhruva hear, nor did he know that anyone was near him, so deeply was he plunged in thought.

Then came terrible demons with fearful weapons, which they brandished before him, out of whose eyes and noses and mouths fierce flames burst forth. But though the demons pressed forward and roared and bellowed, Dhruva was unmoved, and stood first on one leg and then on

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the other, reciting the prayer to Narayana taught him by one of the sages.

Next came hideous beasts with the faces of lions and crocodiles and camels, and surrounded him, and roared and yelled. Jackals with flames leaping from their mouths ran around him, and howled, "Kill him, kill him; cut him up, and eat him!" But it was all in vain, for Dhruva saw only Vishnu enthroned within his heart, and he saw nothing else.

CHAPTER V.

The Gods Distressed.

When the gods saw that they could not move the young ascetic, they went to Hari, Lord of the Universe.

"O Lord of the Universe, we are greatly distressed," they said. "As the moon grows brighter and brighter every day in the bright fortnight, so Dhruva grows mightier and mightier every day. We fear that he aims at the throne of Indra. Save us in our fear."

Then Vishnu said, "Do not be afraid. Dhruva does not seek the throne of Indra or lordship of the sea or the earth. Not wealth nor power does he strive for. He strives but to know me."

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Then, headed by Indra, the gods withdrew to their heavenly home, and were no longer alarmed at the young ascetic's growing power.

CHAPTER VI.

Dhruva's Reward.

The day of awakening was not long in coming. Suddenly one day a great light shone around Dhruva, and he opened his eyes. And what did he see? First a blinding light; then amidst the blaze of light the form of Hari.

As Dhruva bowed low, he heard the Lord of the Universe say, "I am well pleased with your prayers and meditation, my young worshipper. Ask of me a reward."

Dhruva was speechless as he beheld with his eyes the Lord whose form he had contemplated in his heart, so for some little time he just stood gazing on the Lord Narayana, now standing before him with the conch and discus and mace and bow and scimitar and with a crown on his head.

Then at last he found his tongue, and said, bowing low, "Not rank nor power do I seek, O mighty Lord. I crave only that I may worship you aright."

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Holding forth his conch, Vishnu touched Dhruva with the tip of it, when immediately the child broke forth into a song of praise, saying, "O great Lord of the Uuiverse, you know what your creatures desire. You have granted me my heart's desire, for I have seen you face to face. What more can I ask?"

But Vishnu bade him ask a boon, and Dhruva told him of what Suruchi had said to him the morning he had asked to be taken on his father's lap.

"Place me, O Lord of the Universe," he said, "above all living creatures, and I shall find rest."

Vishnu granted him his wish, and gave him a place above the sun and the moon and Venus and Jupiter and the Seven Sages. And to this day he is seen in the northern sky, for he is the pole star, by which the sailor guides his ship on the trackless ocean.

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